

VZCZCXRO6556  
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHRA #0511/01 2351244  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 221244Z AUG 08  
FM AMEMBASSY RIGA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5190  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIGA 000511

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [RS](#) [GG](#) [LG](#)  
SUBJECT: TFGG01: SUPPORTING LATVIA IN LIGHT OF GEORGIA

REF: RIGA 496

Classified By: Ambassador Charles Larson, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Post leadership met internally to discuss ways the USG could show support for Latvia in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Georgia, both to reassure the Latvians of our security commitment and to help them make policy adjustments to deal with the new international relationship with Russia.

12. (C) Proposed items focus on reassurance of USG support, assistance on upgrading security measures and planning, assistance to increase Latvia's energy independence, and exploration of measures that could further the integration of ethnic Russians into Latvian society.

-----  
Reassurance  
-----

13. (C) The single most important step we could take to reassure the Latvian public of our commitment to them and their security would be to admit Latvia to the visa waiver program. While we well understand that admission is based on criteria, moving ahead with one Baltic country before the others could lead to an unhelpful round of self doubt in Latvia.

14. (C) Post also proposes that the Department look at scheduling various high-level visits to Latvia, both for consultations/policy coordination and to publicly show USG solidarity with Latvia as a NATO ally on the frontline with Russia. Possible outreach could include visits from Secretary Rice, U/S Burns, and/or A/S Fried. Additionally, we suggest coordination with DOD/EUCOM to arrange a series of flag-level military visits to Latvia. Such visits could occur in conjunction with Latvia's 90th anniversary of independence celebrations on November 18, and could include flyovers of US aircraft.

-----  
Security Enhancement  
-----

15. (C) Post suggests that the USG increase bilateral military assistance to Latvia and make available USG defense planning resources to the Latvian Ministry of Defense.

16. (C) We also recommend expanding both FMF and IMET assistance, with the emphasis on IMET. While Latvia does have a limit on how much training assistance it can absorb, we recommend a sufficient increase to make up for recent reductions and to make available high-level, strategic courses to Latvian leadership. On FMF, restoring some of the cuts we took in FY08 would demonstrate our commitment to Latvian military modernization.

17. (C) The GOL wants assistance with development of self-defense plans for Latvia. Regardless of any potential Latvian request to NATO, we should make USG expertise and resources available on a bilateral basis to assist the GOL in

developing their own NATO-compatible self-defense plans.

¶8. (C) Post also recommends that the USG look for creative means to provide Latvia with expertise on countering cyber-attack threats. This expertise could include cooperation with the NATO cyber-defense center in Estonia.

-----  
Energy Independence  
-----

¶9. (C) Latvia faces a greater threat from Russia in the form of energy and economic dominance, than from overt military attack. We therefore recommend that the USG more actively work to make proposals of a Swedish-Baltic electrical link a reality. This engagement would move the issue from the strictly commercial realm to being viewed as a vital political and security imperative. Combined with this, efforts to promote alternative energy in Latvia and to involve U.S. companies in Latvia's energy plant construction plans should be enhanced.

-----  
Integration of ethnic Russians  
-----

¶10. (C) To promote the stability of Latvian society, and to remove a possible excuse for Russian meddling, new possibilities should be explored on how to integrate ethnic Russians into Latvian society, with the goal being that those communities would think of themselves as Latvian/European first, rather than letting their Russian cultural affinities

RIGA 00000511 002 OF 002

define their political allegiances.

¶11. (C) The existence of two separate media spheres, one Latvian, one Russian, is a major roadblock in attaining this goal. The Department should review what means are available to increase the amount of Western-origin, Russian-language programming and literature in Latvia. Key aspects of such a review would be to increase the amount of non-Moscow-origin Russian language news programming, as well as to assess what capabilities exist to translate and place Western political commentaries and news features into Russian language media.

LARSON